

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 142620
ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-15 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY AF/W:BSKIRKPATRICK:DFP
APPROVED BY AF/W- TWMSMITH
AF/I- LGSHURTLEFF
DESIRED DISTRIBUTION
AFONLY

-----015327 201815Z /42

O 201741Z JUN 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY COTONOU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 142620

E.O. 11652:XGDS-3

TAGS:SHUM, DM

SUBJECT: PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN-DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS
COUNTRY ACTION PLAN

REF: A) STATE 139160; B) COTONOU 1021

1. THE GEOGRAPHIC BUREAUS HAVE BEEN TASKED TO PREPARE
HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION REPORTS INCLUDING AN ASSESSMENT
OF THE CURRENT CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN EACH COUNTRY
AND THE PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IM-
PROVING THOSE CONDITIONS.

2. THIS CABLE TRANSMITS THE DESK'S DRAFT REPORT FOR
YOUR COMMENTS. A RESPONSE IS REQUESTED BY JUNE 28 SO
THAT THE BUREAU CAN MEET THE SUBMISSION DATE OF JULY 1.

3. THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE COUNTRY EVALUATION
WILL BE CLASSIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXECUTIVE ORDER
LL652. REPORTS WILL BE USED AS SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE
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PREPARATION OF ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS ON ALL COUNTRIES
WHICH ARE RECIPIENTS OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE, AND WILL
BE SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINAT-
ING COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY.

4. DRAFT PLAN

A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BENIN

1. RESPECT FOR INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON INCLUDING FREEDOM
FROM:

A) TORTURE: THERE ARE FREQUENT RUMORS OF USE OF TORTURE

ESPECIALLY AT THE MILITARY PRISON BUT EVIDENCE IS
DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN.

B) CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT: SEVERE
BEATING BY THE POLICE FOR THE MOST MINOR CRIMES SAID TO
BE COMMONPLACE. THERE ARE MANY RUMORS OF DEGRADING
TREATMENT, ESPECIALLY AT THE MILITARY PRISON.

C) ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT: RELATIVELY COMMON
ESPECIALLY SINCE ATTEMPTED COUP BY MERCENARIES ON
JANUARY 16. ARRESTS HAVE INCLUDED SOME AMERICANS INCLUDING
EMBASSY EMPLOYEES. ALL AMERICANS HAVE BEEN RELEASED.
NUMEROUS PEOPLE SUSPECTED OF SUBVERSION HAVE BEEN ARRESTED
AND DETAINED FOR INDEFINITE TIME WITHOUT CHARGE. SEVERAL
DOZEN ESTIMATED INCARCERATED ON PERMANENT BASIS.

D) DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL: GENERAL RULE FOR
ANYONE SUSPECTED OF SUBVERSION. RELEASE CAN BE AUTHORIZED
ONLY BY SENIOR POLICE OR INTERIOR OFFICIALS. ONLY MINOR
NONPOLITICAL DEFENDERS RECEIVE LEGAL PROTECTION.
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"MOCK" TRIALS ARE SOMETIMES STAGED.

(E) INVASION OF THE HOME: COMMON.

2. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES.

A) FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY: GENERALLY
PROHIBITED. PRESS IS GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED, DISTRI-
BUTION OF WESTERN JOURNALS PROHIBITED. FREE ASSEMBLY
AND SPEECH CURTAILED. EVEN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS MAY
LEAD TO DIFFICULTIES WITH GOVERNMENT. NO SPECIFIC
POLICY OF RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION BUT CATHOLICS AND
OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS HAVE BEEN ASSAILED, AND JEHOVAH'S
WITNESSES HAVE BEEN BANNED, THEIR PROPERTY CONFISCATED
AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS SUBJECTED TO HARASSMENT.

B) FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN A COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL
AND EMIGRATION POLICIES: FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN COUNTRY,
EVEN FOR FOREIGN DIPLOMATS, IS RESTRICTED. ENTRY AND

EXIT ARE DIFFICULT. ARRIVING FOREIGNERS MAY BE DETAINED
ON SUSPICION.

C) DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES ASSURING THE FREEDOM TO PARTI-
CIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS: NO PROVISIONS IN THE
WESTERN SENSE. GOVERNMENT WILL OFTEN REQUIRE PEOPLE TO
ATTEND RALLIES, CONTRIBUTE FUNDS OR LABOR. GOVERNMENT

POLITICAL PARTY APPEARS PRIMARILY MEANS OF CONTROL
RATHER THAN SOUNDING BOARD FOR EVEN IN-HOUSE COMPLAINTS
BY LOYAL FOLLOWERS.

3. RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO
THE FULLFILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, SHELTER,
HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION.

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A) EXTENT TO WHICH POLICIES RESPOND TO OR IGNORE NEEDS
OF THE POOR: GENERAL POLICY IS AIMED AT HELPING THE
POOR ECONOMICALLY, AND IMPROVING EDUCATION AND HEALTH
CARE, BUT ITS IMPLEMENTATION IS IDEOLOGICALLY RIGID.
FOOD PRODUCTION POLICY FOR EXAMPLE DOES NOT ALLOW FOR
ADEQUATE INCENTIVES BUT RELIES INSTEAD ON EXHORTATION.
MERCHANTS ARE BLAMED FOR FAILURES OF THE DISTRIBUTION
SYSTEM AND UNAVAILABILITY OF GOODS. REGIME HAS TRIED TO
SUPPRESS MERCHANT, MIDDLE CLASS INFLUENCE AS POLITICALLY
DANGEROUS. EDUCATION IS ORIENTED TOWARDS REGIME'S VIEWS
AND HAS LED TO DISRUPTIONS SUCH AS CHANGE IN THE SCHOOL
YEAR WHICH HAVE COMPLICATED THE EFFORTS OF FOREIGN
DONORS TO ASSIST IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR. PROPERTY
TRANSACTIONS ARE SEVERELY LIMITED AND PROPERTY OF
POLITICALLY UNCOOPERATIVE PERSONS OFTEN IS CONFISCATED.

B) CORRUPTION OF SUCH A NATURE THAT SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES
ARE DIVERTED TOWARDS THE NATION'S ELITES AND AWAY FROM
THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION: TRADITIONAL CORRUPTION
PROBABLY HAS BEEN REDUCED BY NEW REGIME'S ADHERENCE TO
MARXIST IDEOLOGY. OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORRUPTION APPARENTLY
ARE MORE CONFINED TO UPPER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT WHERE IT
IS STILL BELIEVED TO OCCUR. SIGNIFICANT EXAMPLES NOT
EVIDENT. THE IDEOLOGICALLY RIGID APPROACH TO ECONOMIC
PROBLEMS ENCOURAGES CORRUPTION AT ALL LEVELS TO GET
AROUND RESTRICTIONS.

4. LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREGOING
HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD:

A) EXTENT TO WHICH POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS MEASURES ARE
ARTICULATED AS PUBLIC POLICY: REGIME HAS NOT SUPPORTED
HUMAN RIGHTS EXCEPT IN TERMS OF RACIAL FREEDOM FROM
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DOMINATION BY WHITES, AND RIGHTS OF POOR COUNTRIES OVER
RICH COUNTRIES. REGIME FOLLOWS "MARXISM/LENINISM" AND
BELIEVES THAT IT IS REORGANIZING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
STRUCTURE IN BEST INTERESTS OF PEOPLE, AND IN CONFORMITY
WITH "JUST" IDEOLOGY.

B) EXTENT TO WHICH VIOLATIONS CONDONED AS PUBLIC POLICY BECAUSE OF SECURITY OR OTHER JUSTIFICATIONS: THE GOVERNMENT OF BENIN , ESPECIALLY SINCE JANUARY 16 MERCENARY ATTACK, HAS ENCOURAGED SUSPICION OF WHITES AND ANYONE WHO MIGHT BE OPPOSED TO GOVERNMENT. REPRESSION IS JUSTIFIED BY NEED FOR INTERNAL SECURITY. ALTHOUGH JANUARY 16 ATTACK WAS OBVIOUS REASON FOR CONCERN, GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE USING THAT INCIDENT TO JUSTIFY OVERALL CAMPAIGN OF REPRESSION.

5. WILLINGNESS AND PAST RECORD OF GOVERNMENT REGARDING INDEPENDENT, OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS: THE GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGED A UN SECURITY COUNCIL MISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE JANUARY 16 COUP ATTEMPT. GOVERNMENT WOULD PROBABLY REACT TO ATTEMPT AT OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. REGIME HAS NOT BEEN RESPONSIVE TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL INTEREST.

B. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. SIGNIFICANT OBJECTIVES OVER NEXT THREE TO TWELVE MONTHS IN RELATION TO IMPROVING CONDITIONS WITH RESPECT TO CATEGORIES A1, 2 AND 3 ABOVE.

(1) RESPECT FOR INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON.

OBJECTIVE - TRY TO ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENT TO LIMIT OVERALL REPRESSION, CONCENTRATE INITIALLY ON ARBITRARY ARRESTS
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AND DEGRADING TREATMENT.

IMPORTANCE: REPRESENTS MOST SIGNIFICANT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION AND CAUSES MUCH SUFFERING.

FEASIBILITY: REGIME MAY HAVE SOME CONCERN ABOUT ITS HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE, BUT IS PREOCCUPIED WITH SECURITY AND BENT ON RIGID CONTROL.

U.S. LEVERAGE: VERY LIMITED. OUR PRIMARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ARE RELATED TO AGREEMENTS REACHED PRIOR TO REGIME'S CONVERSION TO MARXISM/LENINISM AND INCREASED REPRESSION. INTERNAL SECURITY RESTRICTIONS AND GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE HAVE PLACED EXTENT OF OUR FUTURE AID PROGRAMS

AND PEACE CORPS OPERATIONS IN QUESTION. GOVERNMENT IS IDEOLOGICALLY HOSTILE. HOWEVER, REGIME STILL ASKS FOR ASSISTANCE IN LIMITED TRAINING PROGRAMS AND HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN PL-480 TITLE II 206 BECAUSE OF A FOOD SHORTAGE.

WE HAVE INDICATED A TITLE II 206 IS IMPRACTICAL AND PROPOSED A REGULAR TITLE II. NO RESPONSE.

LIKELY INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT: BENIN'S PRINCIPAL RELATIONS NOW ARE WITH THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. WESTERN COUNTRIES

GIVING BENIN ASSISTANCE, SUCH AS GERMANY AND CANADA MIGHT BE WILLING TO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORT BUT WITH ONLY LIMITED ENTHUSIASM AND PROSPECT OF PRODUCTIVE RESULTS.

OPTIONS:

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(A) CUT U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. WE ARE PLANNING LITTLE FOR BENIN, PEACE CORPS ACTIVITY IS DECLINING, ASSISTANCE THROUGH ENTENTE FUND AND REGIONAL PROGRAMS

CONTINUE AS USUAL. DOLS 11 MILLION BRIDGE/DAM LOAN PRESENTLY BEING IMPLEMENTED.

(B) INCREASE U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THERE IS A FAIRLY LIMITED AREA IN WHICH U.S. ASSISTANCE COULD BE INCREASED, GIVEN REGIME'S HOSTILE ATTITUDE AND INTERNAL SECURITY RESTRICTIONS.

C) WE PROVIDE NO SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND REGIME UNLIKELY TO BE INTERESTED.

D) EXIM BANK CREDITS - INTERNAL MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY IS NOT CONDUCIVE TO EXIM BANK CREDITS.

E) QUIET DIPLOMACY - GPRB HAS QUESTIONED OUR HUMAN RIGHTS CHARGES ON BENIN AND STATED THAT SECURITY CONDITIONS JUSTIFY PRESENT MEASURES.

F) IFI LOANS - WE HAVE ALREADY INDICATED TO BENINESE AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON THAT OUR VOTE ON IDA LOAN PROPOSALS FOR BENIN WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BENIN'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD AND INFORMED GPRB OF OUR ABSTENTION ON WORLD BANK LOANS TO BENIN.

(2) RESPECT FOR POLITICAL AND CIVIL LIBERTIES:

OBJECTIVE: ENCOURAGE REGIME TO ALLOW MORE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MOVEMENT.

IMPORTANCE: SECONDARY IN RELATION TO OBJECTIVES FOR

(1) ABOVE. FEASIBILITY, LEVERAGE AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT ESSENTIALLY SAME AS FOR (1) ABOVE.

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3. RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION.

OBJECTIVE: ENCOURAGE REGIME TO PURSUE ITS THEORETICALLY CONSTRUCTIVE GOALS IN LESS IDEOLOGICALLY RIGID MANNER.

IMPORTANCE: SHOULD PRODUCE BETTER OVERALL HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE BUT GIVEN REGIME'S IDEOLOGICAL RIGIDITY, ROLE OF THIS ASPECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS NOT CLEAR.

FEASIBILITY: REGIME IS INTERESTED IN ASSISTANCE BUT PRIMARILY ON ITS OWN IDEOLOGICAL TERMS WHICH TENDS TO LIMIT VALUE AND EXTENT OF ASSISTANCE. REGIME PROBABLY NOT OPEN TO ADVICE ON MORE PRACTICAL ECONOMIC POLICIES.

U.S. LEVERAGE: ESSENTIALLY SAME AS IN (1) ABOVE.

LIKELY INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT: ESSENTIALLY SAME AS IN (1) ABOVE. IFI'S PROVIDE SUPPORT BUT NOT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REASONS.

OPTIONS: LIMITED TO B OF (1) ABOVE.

RECOMMENDATIONS: WE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN QUIET DIPLOMACY AND IFI APPROACH FOR OBJECTIVES (1) AND (2). DEPENDING ON GPRB REACTION AND DEVELOPING HUMAN RIGHTS PICTURE IN BENIN OTHER OPTIONS CAN BE CONSIDERED. FOR ALL THREE OBJECTIVES WE SHOULD PROBABLY CONTINUE PRESENT LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE TO BENIN. BUT IF THERE IS NO CHANGE OR SITUATION DETERIORATES WE SHOULD REVIEW
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ASSISTANCE TO BENIN. IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT DIRECT OFFER OF ASSISTANCE INCREASE, OR ADVICE ON PRACTICAL ECONOMIC MEASURES WOULD AFFECT REGIME'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES. IF PL-480 TITLE II REQUEST IS ADQUATELY JUSTIFIED AND MEETS PROGRAM REQUIREMENT WE SHOULD CONSIDER IT FAVORABLY.

2. PRINCIPAL REACTIONS IN HOST COUNTRIES TO NEW U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES AND EMBASSY ACTIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THOSE POLICIES: GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN HAS HAD LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES BUT GENERALLY VIEWS INDIVIDIAL RIGHTS AS WESTERN/CAPITALIST CONCEPT AND BELIEVES THAT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HUMAN

RIGHTS SHOULD ONLY BE ACCORDED TO IDEOLOGICALLY COOPERATIVE PERSONS. IN MID-MAY WE MADE INITIAL HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH IN DISCUSSION BETWEEN ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS AND BENINESE AMBASSADOR IN WHICH WE ALSO COMPLAINED ABOUT DETENTION OF A U.S. CITIZEN AND APPLICATION OF BENINESE INTERNAL SECURITY RESTRICTIONS TO DIPLOMATS. APPROACH GENERALLY NOTED OUR CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND EMPHASIZED THAT WE WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BENIN'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IN VOTING ON IDA PROPOSED LOANS FOR BENIN. WE SUBSEQUENTLY ABSTAINED IN A VOTE ON

TWO IDA LOANS FOR BENIN (DOLS 7.5 MILLION). REACTION OF BENINESE AMBASSADOR WAS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN IN-COMPREHENSION AND GUILT. HE STATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS VERY CONCERNED WITH HUMAN RIGHTS AND THAT IT HAD NOT EXECUTED PRISONERS. IN SAME CONTEXT HE STATED THAT THE ONLY PEOPLE NOT FREE IN BENIN WERE THOSE WHO WERE OPPOSED TO GOVERNMENT POLICY. HE ALSO ASSOCIATED HUMAN RIGHTS REMARKS WITH OUR PROTEST OVER DETENTION OF U.S. CITIZEN. THE GPRB IN COTONOU RESPONDED TO OUR ABSTENTION ACTION BY QUESTIONING CONFIDENTIAL

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OUR CHARGES OF VIOLATIONS AND JUSTIFYING PRESENT MEASURES ON SECURITY GROUNDS. THEY ALSO INFORMED US THAT NEW CONSTITUTION BEING DRAFTED. EMBASSY BELIEVES THERE ARE SOME SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. WE HAVE NO REACTION FROM NON-GOVERNMENTAL GROUPS IN BENIN REGARDING OUR NEW HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES BUT ARE AWARE THAT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN BENIN ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE REGIME'S OPPRESSIVE POLICIES.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF REACTIONS IN 2 ABOVE FOR POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHANGES IN HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS: PROSPECTS FOR SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS IN BENIN ARE POOR. THE REGIME IS RELATIVELY YOUNG AND IN A TIGHTENING UP STAGE REINFORCED BY A MERCENARY ATTACK IN JANUARY.

4. A) IMPACT OF PROPOSED ACTIONS ON U.S. INTEREST. THE U.S. HAS LIMITED INTEREST IN BENIN. WE HAVE HAD NO AMBASSADOR THERE SINCE FEBRUARY 1976 WHEN OUR AMBASSADOR WAS RECALLED FOLLOWING DISCOURTEOUS TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF BENINESE OFFICIALS. BENIN IS OF LITTLE INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE. ACTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IF TAKEN CAUTIOUSLY MIGHT SLIGHTLY IMPROVE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT BUT A

MORE LIKELY RESULT IS A NEGATIVE RESPONSE. A STRONG APPROACH WOULD PROBABLY DISRUPT OUR ALREADY LIMITED

PRESENCE.

B) LIKELIHOOD OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORTING U.S. EFFORTS
TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH GOVERNMENT AND NON-
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: NOT APPLICABLE.

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5. ABOVE DRAFTED PRIOR TO RECEIPT OF COTONOU 1021. PLEASE
WEAVE COMMENTS IN THAT CABLE INTO NEW FORMAT. VANCE

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, HUMAN RIGHTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE142620
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AF/W:BSKIRKPATRICK:DFF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 XGDS-3
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770219-1037
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197706110/baaatba.tel
Line Count: 393
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 211e9e73-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 8
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A) STATE 139160; B) COTONOU 1021
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2012899
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN-DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS COUNTRY ACTION PLAN
TAGS: SHUM, DM
To: COTONOU
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/211e9e73-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009